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By *ADAM FITZ-ADAM.*

To be continued every THURSDAY.

THURSDAY, *January* the 17th, 1754.

———*Extinctus amabitur.* HOR.

To Mr. FITZ-ADAM.

SIR,

I AM one of those benevolent persons, who having no land of their own, and not being free of any one corporation, like true citizens of the world, turn all their thoughts to the good of the public, and are known by the general name of projectors. All the good I ever did or thought of, was for the public. My sole anxiety has been for the security, health, revenue and credit of the public: nor did I ever think of paying any debts in my whole life, except those of the public. This public spirit, you already suppose, has been most amply rewarded; and perhaps suspect that I am going to trouble you with an ostentatious boast of the public money I have touched;

or that I am deviſing ſome artful evaſion of an enquiry into the method by which I amaſſed it. On the contrary, I muſt aſſure you that I have carried annually the fruits of twelve months deep thought to the treaſury, pay-office and victualling-office, without having brought from any one of thoſe places the leaſt return of treaſure, pay, or victuals. At the admiralty the porters can read the longitude in my night-gown, as plainly as if the plaid was worked into the letters of that word. And I have had the mortification to ſee a man with the dulleſt project in the world admitted to the board, with no other preference than that of being a ſtranger, while I have been kept ſhivering in the court.

AFTER this ſhort hiſtory of myſelf, it is time I ſhould communicate the project I have to propoſe for your particular conſideration.

MY propoſal is, that a new office be erected in this metropolis, and called the EXTINGUISHING OFFICE. In explaining the nature of this OFFICE, I ſhall endeavour to convince you of it's extraordinary utility: and that the ſcope and intent of it may be perfectly underſtood, I beg leave to be indulged in making a few philoſophical remarks.

THERE is no obſervation more juſt or common in experience, than that every thing excellent in nature or art, has a certain fixed point of perfection, proper to itſelf, which it cannot tranſgreſs without loſing much of it's beauty, or acquiring ſome blemiſh.

THE period which time puts to all mortal things, is brought about by an imperceptible decay: and whatever is once paſt the criſis of maturity, affords only the melancholy proſpect of being impaired hourly, and of advancing through the degrees of aggravated deformity to it's diſſolution.

WE inconſiderately bewail a great man, whom death has taken off, as we ſay, in the bloom of his glory; and yet confeſs it would have been happier for Priam, Hannibal, Pompey and the duke of Marlborough, if fate had put an earlier period to their lives.

INSTEAD

INSTEAD of quoting a multitude of latin verſes, I refer you to that part of the tenth ſatire of Juvenal, which treats of longævity: but I muſt deſire particularly to remind you of the force of the following paſſage;

Provida Pompeio dederat Campania febres
Optandas.———

It is to a mature reflection on the ſenſe of this paſſage that I owe the greateſt thought which ever entered the brain of a projector: and I doubt not, if I could once eſtabliſh the OFFICE in queſtion, of being able to ſtrike out from this hint a certain method of practice that would be as beneficial to mankind, as it would be new and extraordinary.

IT has been the uſual cuſtom, when old generals have worn out their bodies by the toils of many glorious campaigns, beauties their complexions by the fatigues of exhibiting their perſons, or patriots their conſtitutions by the heat of the houſe, to ſend them to ſome purer air abroad, or to Kenſington gravel pits at home: but as there is nothing ſo juſtly to be dreaded as the chance of ſurviving good fame, I am for ſending all ſuch perſons in the zenith of their glory to the fens in Eſſex.

As it is with man himſelf, ſo likewiſe ſhall we find it with every thing that proceeds from him. His plans are great, juſt, and noble; worthy the divine image he bears. His progreſſion and execution, *to a certain point*, anſwerable to his deſigns; but beyond it, all is weakneſs, deformity and diſgrace. To be aſſured of this point, it is as neceſſary to conſult another, as the ſick man his phyſician to know the criſis of his diſtemper: but whom to apply to, is the important queſtion. A friend is of all men living the moſt unfit, becauſe good counſel and ſincere advice are known to produce an immediate diſſolution of all ſocial connexions. The neceſſity of a new OFFICE is therefore evident; which OFFICE I propoſe ſhall be hereafter executed by commiſſion, but firſt (by way of trial) by a ſingle perſon, inveſted with proper powers, and univerſally acknowledged by the ſtile and title of SWORN EXTINGUISHER. To explain the functions of this perſon, I ſhall relate to you the accident which furniſhed the firſt hint for what I am now offering to your peruſal.

WHENEVER

WHENEVER I have been ſo happy as to be maſter of a candle, I have obſerved that though it has burnt with great brightneſs to a certain point, yet the moment that the flame has reached that point, it has become leſs and leſs bright, riſing and falling with great inequalities, till at laſt it has expired in a moſt intolerable ſtink. In other families, where poverty is not the directreſs, the candle lives and dies without leaving any ill odour behind it; and this by the well-timed application of a machine called an EXTINGUISHER.

IT is the uſe of this machine that I am deſirous of extending: and what confirmed me in the project was my happening one ſunday to drop into a church, where the top of the pulpit was a deep concave, not very unlike the implement above-mentioned. The ſermon, which had begun and proceeded in a regular uniform tenor, grew towards the latter end extremely different; now lofty, now low, now flaſhy, now dark——In ſhort, the preacher and his canopy brought ſo ſtrongly to my mind the expiring candle and it's EXTINGUISHER, that I longed to have the power of properly applying the one to the other; and from that moment conceived a project of ſuſpending hollow cones of tin, braſs, or wood over the heads of all public ſpeakers, with lines and pullies to lower them occaſionally.

I CARRIED this project to a certain great man, who was pleaſed to reject it; telling me of ſeveral devices which might anſwer the purpoſe better; and inſtancing, among many other practices, that of the ROBIN HOOD ſociety, where the preſident performs the office of an EXTINGUISHER by a ſingle ſtroke of a hammer. In ſhort, the arguments of this great man prevailed with me to lay aſide my firſt ſcheme, but furniſhed me at the ſame time with hints for a more extenſive one.

AT the playhouſe the curtain is not only always ready, but capable of EXTINGUISHING at once all the perſons of the drama. How many new tragedies might be ſaved for the future, if the curtain was to drop by authority as ſoon as the heroe was dead! Or how happily might the languid, pale and putrid flames of a whole fifth act be EXTINGUISHED by the eſtabliſhment of ſuch an OFFICE!

IN

In applying it to epic poetry, I could not but felicitate the author of the Iliad. The EXTINGUISHER of the Æneid deſerves the higheſt encomiums——Happy Virgil! but O wretched Milton! more unhappy in the blindneſs of thy commentators, than in thy own! who, to thy eternal diſgrace, would preſerve thy two concluding lines, with the ſame ſuperſtition with which the GEBERS venerate the ſnuff of a candle, and cry out ſacrilege if you offer to extinguiſh it!

I PERCEIVE I ſhall want room to explain my method of EXTINGUISHING Talkers in private companies; but that I may not appear to you like thoſe quacks who boaſt of more than they can perform, let me convince you that the attempt is not impracticable, by reminding you of Apelles, who ſtanding behind one of his pictures, liſtened with great patience while a ſhoemaker was commending the foot; but the moment the mechanic was paſſing on to the leg, ſtept from his hiding place, and EXTINGUISHED him at once with the famous proverb in uſe at this day, "The ſhoemaker muſt not go beyond "his laſt."

BUT whenever this office is put into commiſſion, I propoſe, for this laſt-mentioned branch, to take in a proper number of ladies; I mean ſuch as dreſs in the height of the mode; who being equipped with hoops in the utmoſt extent of the faſhion, are always provided with an EXTINGUISHER ready for immediate uſe. By the application of this machine to the above-mentioned purpoſe, I ſhall have the farther ſatisfaction, of vindicating the ladies from the unjuſt imputation of bearing about them any thing uſeleſs. And as the Chineſe knew gunpowder, the ancients the loadſtone, and the moderns electricity, many years before they were applied to the benefit of mankind, it will not appear ſtrange if a noble uſe be at length found for the HOOP, which has, to be ſure, till now, afforded mere matter of ſpeculation.

I NOW EXTINGUISH myſelf, and am, ſir,

Your moſt humble ſervant,

A. B.

P. S.